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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Underage Drinking...Silence is Permission.

Eau Claire, Wisconsin – April 19, 2013. The Parents Who Host Campaign is all about underage drinking being unsafe, unhealthy, and illegal. This year's campaign encourages parents and other adults to talk with youth about these facts. Kids need to hear the message that "underage drinking is not okay" from their parents. When kids don't hear this message from parents or other trusted adults, they are left to draw their own conclusions.

Are you silent about underage drinking? Chief Jerry Matysik from the Eau Claire Police Department stresses the importance of speaking to your kids. "Our children grow up surrounded by people drinking alcohol. Unless parents talk to children about the unsafe and unhealthy consequences of underage drinking, our youth will not have the information necessary to make smart choices." Your kids need your help drawing accurate and healthy conclusions about what they see regarding alcohol.

Dads, Moms, and other adults play a key role in influencing their kids and have the greatest power to influence their child's decisions about alcohol. Dr. Mark Gideonson from UW Health – Augusta explains that these conversations need to happen earlier than parents might think, "Parents are often shocked when I tell them that on average, kids in Eau Claire County start drinking at age 13, in middle school. I tell them, 'You've got to start talking before they start drinking.'"

Kristin Hildebrand, Reality Check 21 Partnership Coordinator with the Eau Claire City-County Health Department, shares why the conversation is important, "In Eau Claire County 4 out of 10 youth still don't think beer is harmful to their health. Parents need to explain to their kids why underage alcohol use is unhealthy, and they need to revisit this idea several times during the teen years because kids continue to change."

Eau Claire Parent Jamie Christianson-Fawcett encourages parents to weave conversations about alcohol use into regular family routines. "We have been talking with our kids about not using alcohol for several years, and found that it works well to remind them how we feel when alcohol issues are brought up in movies, TV shows, and local media reports. These are great opportunities to bring up the topic in a conversational way so kids will be more receptive."

This year's *Parents Who Host Lose the Most Campaign* is a countywide effort sponsored by the Reality Check 21 Partnership that asks parents and other adults to Start Talking, because, Silence is Permission.

- Talk to your kids about alcohol. Let them know you don't approve of underage drinking.
- Look for natural opportunities to have additional conversations as kids continue to develop and change.
- Find out how to start talking at www.getinvolvedASAP.org and click on "Start Talking."
- Be sure to store alcohol safely (lock it up) and supervise all youth gatherings!

To become involved in efforts to reduce underage drinking, please contact Kristin Hildebrand at Kristin.hildebrand@co.eau-claire.wi.us or at 715-839-2874.

The Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP) at the Eau Claire City-County Health Department is a coalition of coalitions working to improve the lives of children, youth, and adults by mobilizing communities to prevent and treat alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse in Eau Claire County. Reality Check 21 Partnership, a member coalition of ASAP, is comprised of individuals dedicated to reducing underage drinking in Eau Claire County. The Partnership includes members from Altoona, Augusta, Eau Claire and Fall Creek. The Drug Free Communities Program, Wisconsin DPI AODA Grant, and the Eau Claire Morning and Noon Rotary Clubs provide funding for this campaign. *Parents Who Host, Lose the Most: Don't be a party to teenage drinking* was developed by the Drug-Free Action Alliance in Ohio.

